

**Virginia Comprehensive Assistance Network [VA CAN] Meeting**  
**June 28, 2007**  
**Meeting Notes**

**NEXT MEETING AUGUST 23, 2007 – MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**Attendance:**

Mike Eisenman—Virginia Commonwealth University  
Stu Neal—small business and entrepreneurship consultant  
Richard Rasmussen—DEQ, Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP), DEQ  
Jennifer Wester —Dept. of Labor and Industry Voluntary Compliance Program  
Marcia Loschiavo — National Federation of Independent Businesses  
Keith Boisvert — DEQ, Pollution Prevention Program  
Kelly Harris-Braxton — Virginia First Cities

**1. Opening/Introductions – Richard Rasmussen**

Round-the-table introductions

**2. Presentation by Kelly Harris-Braxton, Executive Director, Virginia First Cities**

Virginia First Cities is a 501 C4 corporation that Advocates for cities much in the same way as VACO (Virginia Association of Counties) and VML (Virginia Municipal League) advocate for counties and local governments respectively. The membership of VFC includes Charlottesville, Danville, Fredericksburg, Hampton, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Martinsville, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, Staunton, and Winchester. The organization began in 1999 as a “loose coalition to promote blight legislation” That year they were successful in impacting the passage of 14 bills. Since then the cities have realized that they are indeed “core cities” each of which are burdened by similar issues and problems such as poverty, joblessness, at risk populations, older infrastructures, social issues and high fiscal stress. Today Virginia First Cities has as its priorities

- Education Funding for At-Risk Children
- Redevelopment Housing (Enterprise Zones, Blight Reduction, Brownfield Funding)
- Urban Transportation Funding (Street Maintenance, Transit-moving people to jobs)
- Improving Health and Human Services
- Enhanced Law Enforcement Funding
- Equitable Tax Policies/Service Responsibilities

Virginia First Cities I believe can be an integral part of the mission of VA Can in helping the service providers export their messages and programs to the cities that are participating in the organization.

**Roundtable**

Mike Eisenman told the group that VCU will be hosting its first ever Engineering Career Fair on September 20, 2007. He is interested in getting the word out to corporations, other business and government offices that may have an interest in hiring graduating engineers.

Stu Neal discussed his work with the entrepreneur center and a several programs he had been involved with that had targeted prison and jail releasees and parolees to educate them in starting their own businesses to try to offset the recidivism that is all too frequent. His program which involved 11 “students” was very successful with 7 starting and maintaining their own businesses.

Keith Boisvert who is the P2 program Energy contact indicated the there would be an Energy and Sustainability Conference at VMI on October 16 to 18<sup>th</sup> (<http://www.energyvacon.org/>). There will also be a Green Living and Energy Expo at the Hotel Roanoke on November 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> (<http://www.aecp.org/Expo/pdfs/AECPEXpoFlyer2007.pdf>) sponsored by the Association of Energy Conservation). Keith also indicated that the Pollution Prevention Program would be having the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual EMS Best Practices Conference will be held October 22-24, 2007 at the Hotel Roanoke ([www.cpe.vt.edu/va-ems/agenda.html](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/va-ems/agenda.html)).

Marcia Loschiavo, NFIB indicated the Julia Hammond is the new State Director fo Virginia NFIB. She has been on board about a month. Several of the issues NFIB is interested in at the present time are health care and eminent domain. [Gordon Dixon former director and Va Can participant had left the orbanization in January – we are glad to NFIB back]

Jennifer Wester, DOLI indicated that they had just finished with their annual safety conference which was held in Roanoke this year. It was a great success as usual with 378 participants and 39 vendors.

Richard Rasmussen indicated that he Small Business Assistance Programn had just completed its Dry Cleaner outreach workshops with a very successful workshop in Fairfax this past Sunday with approximately 200 atendees. The SBAP is also working on the 2008 version of the Norhtern Virginia Auto Body Self Certification Program and is trying to schedule a meeting with the major insurance companies to seek their support in fostering the program. Athey are planning on a meeting with the insurance companies in July.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, August 23, 2007 at 10:00 am DEQ Piedmont Regional Office.